

socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

People first, profit second..?

Theresa May
ushers in
revolution.
Not.

PLUS

**The backfire effect
MayDay...MayDay...**

**Hillsborough
Belonging to our belongings**



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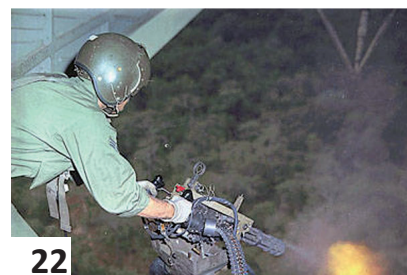
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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to



patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic,

Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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Donald Trump – no workers’ champion

ON THURSDAY 21 July 2016, Donald Trump accepted the Republican Party’s nomination for the Presidency at their Convention in Cleveland, Ohio. About a year ago, when he launched his bid with the slogan ‘Making America Great Again’, few took seriously his chances of success. What makes this unlikely candidate, a real estate tycoon and former reality TV star, who has never held political office, so appealing to many American working class voters?

Many Western nations including the United States have seen much of their manufacturing industry relocated to poorer countries where labour costs are cheaper. The lowering of trade barriers, allowing for the greater movement of goods, services and capital across borders, has contributed to this process. The influence of trade unions has been eroded and many workers find themselves in lower paid and less secure jobs. The Great Recession has hit hardest on these working class communities. They feel abandoned by the political parties that have traditionally claimed to represent them, such as the US Democratic Party,

which, like its Republican opponents, seems only interested in looking after the wealthy. Thus populist politicians – e.g. UKIP in Britain, the SNP in Scotland, the Front National in France and Donald Trump in the US – can gain support as the anti-establishment candidates.

Trump draws much of his support from disaffected mainly older white industrial workers who feel left behind. Paradoxically, his vast wealth enables him to position himself as the workers’ champion, by asserting that, unlike his political opponents, he can’t be bought by vested interests and thus can take on the corporations and wealthy elites. Trump plays the patriotic card and seeks to divide and rule as he pledges to build a wall on the Mexican border to keep out illegal immigrants and expel those that are already in the country. He also says he will introduce a temporary ban on Muslims entering the US. He declares himself the law and order candidate.

However, some of his pledges wouldn’t be entirely out of place in a Bernie Sander’s manifesto. He argues for a rise in the federal minimum wage and pledges

to reform the tax system so that anyone earning less than \$25,000 per year pays no tax. He blames the North American Free Trade Agreement for jobs moving to Mexico and claims that he will be able to negotiate fairer trade deals and bring back jobs to the US. He proposes to penalise American companies that have moved their operations overseas by imposing a 35 percent tariff on goods that they try to import back into the US.

Should Trump become the next US President, he will soon discover that, despite his forceful personality and vast wealth, capitalism’s profit requirements will place severe constraints on what he can achieve and that, like his predecessors, he will have to compromise and run the economic system in favour of the capitalist elites which he currently rails against. For American workers and workers elsewhere, the solution to their problems lies not in choosing a charismatic populist leader, but in collectively organising to get rid of capitalism and establish socialism.

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10: GOTO 20. 20: GOTO 10. 10: GOTO 20....

EVERYBODY KNOWS that computers don't crash like cars or aeroplanes, with explosions and flying debris, so when we say that a computer has 'crashed' it generally means that, due to several competing programs trying to use the same resources at the same time, the computer has got itself tied into an endless loop, trying to perform the same task over and over again, until infinity.

It's not only computers that can get into this state. Capitalism has also never crashed the way cars or aeroplanes crash, in a process NASA once described as 'rapid spontaneous disassembly'. Indeed despite the predictions of some die-hard radical hopefuls it's hard to imagine how it ever could go down like the proverbial lead zeppelin, unless a collective amnesia also descended on people at the same moment in which they simply forgot that they had bank accounts, mortgages, title deeds, rent arrears, gas bills and jobs. Capitalism can't crash because it is not a thing, it is a set of agreements, customs and relationships. It will only crash when the concept of private ownership crashes, when the idea of selling on markets crashes, when its entire underpinning ideology crashes. That's our job.

But it can 'hang' on a regular basis, just like a computer, when for long periods it seems to do nothing at all. It doesn't give us the blue screen of death, it just leaves us swearing and cursing at a stationary progress bar that ought to be moving but isn't. These endless repetitive cycles are what mesmerise us from day to day until we start to hallucinate small change where there isn't any.

You develop a sense of déjà vu the moment fresh news items begin to look like old ones, the way new pop songs sound like old ones, the way new promises smell like old ones. You acquire a sense of what you call 'realism' but other people call cynicism. You develop a sardonic look when anybody mentions politics. The looping sameness of it all, round and round again,

is enough to drive you mad. That's why they call it loopy.

The TV news is like a constant re-run of itself. There have now been so many mass shootings in America that journalists surely must have encoded their aftermath think-pieces into keyboard shortcuts. Ctrl-Shift-F9 to recycle the gun debate. Alt-Shift-Ins to spool out the catalogue of previous shootings. Mail-merge to shunt out the details, filling in variable fields with shooter name, death toll and quotes from world leaders.

Perhaps the business of capitalism actually has crashed and is now in a permanent loop. We can only tinker obsessively with cosmetic on-screen eye-candy but underneath the machinery has all stopped, forcing us to live out an endless Groundhog Day where we wake up in the morning confused and retire to bed disappointed.

Humans are supposed to be good at learning from experience. What are Americans going to learn from the experience of Barack Obama, a man generally regarded as a decent person and by and large a decent president, insofar as a capitalist leader can ever be called such? Could the 'most powerful man in the world' stop white cops shooting defenceless black men? Apparently not. Could he change gun laws to stop the psychos running amok? Apparently not. What about urban poverty? Forget it. Will even his health-care reforms survive the next Republican incumbent in the White House? Probably not. Yet he was treated almost like the Messiah eight years ago when he was first elected. Will Americans learn from this that capitalist leaders, even relatively benevolent ones, can't do anything for them, that it's not worth voting for them, and that the only solution is radical collective action among themselves? No, because they remain mesmerised by the stationary progress bar, afraid to blink in case they miss something. Perhaps they'll vote for Clinton and more non-movement, or perhaps they'll vote for the cowboy Trump, because movement backwards is at least movement.

Socialists have always said that capitalism won't crash of its own accord, it has to be brought down by collective effort. But perhaps we were using the wrong sense of the word 'crash'. In this less dramatic but far more bleak sense, perhaps we can say that capitalism certainly has crashed, and just needs to be turned off. That progress bar is never going to move, no matter how long you stare at it, because it isn't a bar at all, it's a barrier.

**Wag
Your
Jiggly**
IF YOU
haven't



discovered the magic of **Pokemon Go** yet, there's really no help for you, because it's taking the developed world by storm. Every person under (usually) the age of 30 is mad for the new online game where you walk around your home town looking for digital creatures and their exotic eggs, scoring points as you go. It's bigger than Twitter, it's bigger than Brexit on Referendum day, hell it's even bigger than pornography according to Google (BBC Online, 18 July). And what is so killer about this killer app, you might ask? Well, it's the fact that, unlike most other digital games you can play on your phone, this one actually makes you WALK AROUND A BIT. In fact it's being claimed that a man playing every day for a week would burn up the equivalent of SEVEN SMALL CHOCOLATE DOUGHNUTS!

You might, in your cynical socialist way, decide to save yourself the trouble by not eating seven small chocolate doughnuts in the first place, but then you would never have the pleasure of learning the difference between a Psyduck, a Poliwhop or a Jigglypuff (and you have to walk at least two kilometres to find one of those). Mind you, we know from one player that there's nothing to stop you driving between locations, if you've a mind to cheat. Still, it's good to know humans can show real genius, at least when it comes to inventing new ways to waste their own time. Let's vote Poliwhop for President, he'd fit right in!
PJS

FREE LUNCH



Bernie Sanders

bows out



Having acquired less delegates than Hillary Clinton in the primaries, Bernie Sanders has endorsed her as the Democratic candidate for the US presidency in the elections in November.

Even if had won the nomination and actually become President of the United States of America, his freedom of action would be very restricted by economic and political realities and he would have had very little option but to accommodate the capitalist class and their agenda. If he was elected there would be a number of cosmetic changes but the fundamental problem, capitalist property relations, would remain essentially unchanged.

Sanders calls himself a 'socialist.' 'Calls himself' are the key words. If 'socialism' means that a society's means of production are socially, not privately or state owned – then Sanders is no socialist. But even if he doesn't mean the same as we do when he talks about socialism, he can be thanked for at least bringing the term back into vogue, particularly in America where it had disappeared from popular discourse since the times Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas ran for the Presidency. It has been a long time since a serious aspirant for the presidency of the United States talked about 'socialism', no matter how vague their meaning of it is.

Sanders considers the Scandinavian

countries as models to emulate, all capitalist, albeit with comparatively strong social safety nets, but where the wealthy still enjoy a preponderance of economic and political power. These countries have little in common with the socialism envisaged by Marx and other socialist pioneers. What Bernie Sanders means by 'socialism' is something more akin to capitalism with a human face. But this is not what socialism is about. The Scandinavian model has managed to achieve certain social welfare objectives, but they never involved fundamental alterations to capitalism's underlying property relations. Neither would reforms Sanders proposed. Scandinavian reformists thought the benign hand of the state would replace the merciless invisible hand of the market but today the reformers have their hands full just trying to keep hold of what they can from the gains of the past.

The Democratic Party is a party that embraces capitalism. It calls for the reform, not the abolition of capitalism. As again now, Sanders routinely supports Democrats when they run for office. He, in other words, is a reform capitalist politician. He stands on the other side of the class line dividing the working class from the capitalist class. When socialists speak of working class independent political action, we think in terms of class independence. In other words, a

political party entirely under the control of working people, representing their interests and their interest alone.

Sanders' campaign did not rest on any anti-capitalist principle or working-class movement. It was about him getting elected and doing things for working people; he was not encouraging working people to do things for themselves. There was no thought given to constructing a real working-class movement but simply to encourage the unions and working people to remain an appendage to the pro-capitalist Democratic Party. The socialist goal, on the other hand, is not to create a socialist society *for* the working class but to encourage the working class to build socialism *for itself*. Using the words of Eugene Debs, 'If you are looking for a Moses to lead you out of this capitalist wilderness, you will stay right where you are. I would not lead you into the promised land if I could, because if I led you in, someone else would lead you out'.

Neither Sanders nor any other politician can lead us to the alternative society we fight for. We must build it for ourselves. America badly needs a vigorous socialist party. America is a plutocracy, which means government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich. Everything supports that fact. The American working class have been fooled into accepting the concept of common interests wherein the problems of the capitalist class and the state machine are theirs also – that people in the US all belong to one of the world's mightiest military and industrial powers, sharing equally in the glory; so let's all work still harder to increase the arms and wealth of the rulers. The belief that there exists a community of interests from which we all derive common benefits is a mistaken one but nevertheless held strongly.

Two crucial political fallacies permeate American workers' thinking. First, that the present system can be so organised that it will operate in the interests of the majority, through a process of applied reformism, and second, that 'proper leadership' is an essential requirement. However, neither of the foregoing will ever remove any of the major social evils and the socialist mission is to demonstrate that fact.

ALJO

How to avoid the backfire effect and change minds

CONTRARY TO what we might think, when presented with facts that run counter to what we currently believe we have a tendency of hardening, not softening, our currently held beliefs. This tendency is called the **backfire effect** and was discovered by researchers investigating how memory and knowledge are updated after correcting information has been received. The backfire effect works in several ways. Firstly there is the familiarity effect, the more someone is familiar with a claim the more likely they are to accept it as true. So, just mentioning a false claim, even if the purpose is to debunk it, will have the effect of increasing its familiarity and so the likelihood of it later being remembered as true. With this in mind, it is best to just focus on the facts if possible. Secondly, there is the overkill effect, information that is easier to process is more likely to be accepted as true. If we provide too many counter-examples, we will overwhelm our audience making our argument less likely to be accepted than if we had focused on one or two key points. The final and most important of these is the worldview backfire effect, this happens when the information relates to one's self-identity or political outlook. In these cases confirmation, and disconfirmation, bias will be working at their strongest as the tendency is to reject things that do not cleanly fit with the narrative of our

current belief system. We should therefore be most cautious and self-reflective when considering facts that challenge that which we hold most dearly.

So, with all this in mind are we better off abandoning rational argument altogether? Not at all, but we should use this knowledge to act in a way that will be most effective. Instead of trying to bludgeon people into submission with brute facts we should get them to think about their thinking and to consider how they have formed and structured their beliefs. A cue can be taken from the ancient Greek philosopher and social gadfly Socrates who made himself a perpetual thorn in the side of respectable Athenian society, not by pushing his own views, but by endlessly questioning the assumptions of others. It has been shown that we tend to overestimate the completeness of our own understanding. By getting people to explain how and why they think something in detail, we encourage them to look at all the complexities of the issue and make any gaps in their knowledge apparent. When this method has been tried experimentally it has been found to have the effect of softening the certainty that a view is held. Once a gap has been made in someone's mental model the time is right to introduce an alternative explanation, preferably one that explains all the observed features of the event. People tend to prefer a faulty explanation to no explanation at all.

Effective discussion is as much about social skills and awareness as it is about

logic and reasoning. The philosopher Daniel Dennett suggested the following method for achieving a more productive exchange. First, restate your opponent's argument in as clear a form as possible. Then mention any points of agreement, especially non-commonly held ones. State anything new that you have learnt from the argument. Then, only after these first three steps, are you permitted to put forward a rebuttal. By showing that you have taken the time to properly understand your opponent's argument and by indicating what in it you find of value you will already be starting the discussion off on a fertile footing.

Knowing about the common mistakes that we all make enables us to think more clearly about our thinking and so have a greater hope of coming to conclusions that are closer to the truth. If we want to be critical thinkers we should self-identify with the process of critical thinking and not with particular conclusions, that way we can more easily change our opinions in the light of new evidence. We should be seeking to get our politics to fit the facts and not bending the facts to fit our politics. Our default mode of thinking is to retrospectively rationalise reasons to justify our pre-existing beliefs, and by realising this and applying it to our own thinking we are more free to follow the process of reasoning and follow the logic and evidence to wherever it may take us.

DJP



Crocodile tears for the 'have-nots'

COMMENTING THE day after the result of the vote for Brexit, *Times* Economics Editor Philip Aldrick wrote:

'Working class Britons have treated this momentous referendum as a protest vote to register their anger with globalisation, immigration and elitism'.

He was using 'working class' in the occupational sense of manual and industrial workers whereas, in the economic sense, it refers to all obliged by economic necessity to try to sell their mental and physical energies to an employer for a wage or a salary. In other words, nearly everybody except for capitalists and other rich people, making up well over 90 percent of the population. Nearly half of these who took part in the referendum voted for things to remain as they are.

This said, many manual and industrial workers do seem to have voted for Brexit, and in many cases this will have been a protest vote against 'globalisation, immigration and elitism.' The leaders of the Leave campaign certainly angled for this,

even if themselves members of the 'elite'.

A case in point is Iain-Duncan Smith in a speech on 10 May when he said:

'Leaving the EU provides a vital opportunity for us to be able to develop policies that will protect the people who often find themselves at the sharp end of global economic forces and technological change ... Because the EU, despite its grand early intentions, has become a friend of the haves rather than the have-nots.'

Sounding as if he might be Bernie Sanders, he went on:

'But if the EU is working for Germany, for banks, for big corporates and for the public affairs companies with large lobbying operations in Brussels, the EU isn't working for over regulated small businesses and lower-paid and lower-skilled Britons'.

He praised one Remain leader for acknowledging that 'wages will go up for many Britons if immigration is restricted'.

So, what was being promised was that, if Britain left the EU, measures would be taken to protect the 'have-nots' and the 'lower-paid and lower-skilled' workers. This from a man who until recently and for the six previous years had been the cabinet minister in charge of bashing 'have-nots' on benefits, making their life a misery as well as cutting their money.

This vote-catching manoeuvre seems to have worked enough to help the Leave vote get past the 50 percent mark. But

those who fell for this and voted Leave to gain protection against the effects of globalisation are going to be cruelly disappointed. The members of the 'elite' who led the Leave campaign were just as much in favour of the free play of global market forces, of so-called 'neo-liberalism', as their counterparts in the Remain campaign. These 'liberal leavers', as they are now coming out as, never had any intention of protecting workers from the effects of globalisation or to raise the wages of the least skilled. They only wanted the votes of the victims of the closures of unprofitable coalmines, shipyards and steelworks.

But even if they had genuinely wanted to try to stand up to global market forces, they wouldn't have been able to, at least not without undermining the competitiveness of British companies on world markets. The resulting loss of exports, and the economic and financial consequences of this, would sooner or later force them back into line.

The only way that Duncan-Smith's 'have-nots' – and the rest of the working class – can protect themselves from the adverse effects of globalisation is to get together with their counterparts in other countries to replace global capitalism with global socialism where the Earth's productive resources will have become the common heritage of all humanity.



MayDay... MayDay...

IN THE beginning it was a major event in British politics but then the election for David Cameron's replacement as Conservative Party Leader began to crumble away, until Theresa May stood supreme with no other contenders. The first to fall, in the first round, was Liam Fox, who was eliminated with only 16 votes. Fox is a politician with a not-entirely-creditable past. His standing as a Party favourite was once asserted in his being the Secretary of State for Defence but this perished when he allowed a particular aspect of his ministerial relationships to become what he described as 'blurred'. This imaginative euphemism referred to his contact with one Adam Wherritty, a friend and flatmate from his past. According to Fox they happened to meet again when he was on ministerial business abroad and their previous friendship was allowed to flourish to the extent that Wherritty was included on a succession of such trips and gave out his own business cards, encouraging the impression that he was an official adviser and assistant to Fox, attending meetings with foreign diplomats, contractors and military commanders. It was inescapable that Fox should be sacked, but he seems now to have been regarded as entitled to enough remission to be rewarded by May with the new Ministry for International Trade.

Stephen Crabb

The next hopeful to crumble away was Stephen Crabb, who since his first promotion in 2012 to Under-Secretary of State for Wales, had risen to Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. When he declared his intention to stand for the party leadership Crabb was careful to announce that he had already appointed his prospective Chancellor of the Exchequer in Business Minister Sajid Javid. During his brief campaign he made much of his materially deprived history, including when he was eight and his mother left his father who had lived on the old Sickness Benefit since before Crabb's birth. Crabb then indomitably studied his way up the educational and career ladder, into Parliament and then as a Minister. Whatever Crabb's background may have taught him it was not to have any reservations in the matter of the so-called welfare scroungers, so often

denounced as the serious cause of their own chronic misery rather than to face the cruel reality of poverty in a class divided system. In May 2015, after the introduction of an example of 'welfare reform' by Iain Duncan Smith, Crabb commented 'We can't go soft on welfare reform in a place like Wales – it's precisely the place that needs it'.

CARE

He went on to vote in favour of the reduction by £30 a week of the Employment and Support Allowance to disabled people in the 'work-related activity group'. Soon afterwards he was asked 'Why do you hate the sick?' in some graffiti on the vandalised façade of his office. With all this it is not surprising that Crabb is a firm believer in prayer as an aid in making way through the turmoil of capitalism and its structures of family, class, deprivation, human relationships and



Fox

the like. He has links with Christian Action Research and Education (CARE) which is opposed to full LGBT rights and which, while asserting that it does not actively support the concept of 'gay cure theology' did sponsor a conference which discussed 'therapeutic approaches to same sex attraction'. CARE supported him as a parliamentary intern and has supplied interns to his office. Recently he voted against same-sex marriage. Crabb has been married for 20 years to a woman he met at university; they have two children and he has respected his family for its 'core values of resilience, optimism and humility'. However it has recently been revealed that he has resumed contact with another woman, who is in her twenties. They met several years ago and at the time of the Referendum they were exchanging suggestive internet messages such as his telling her of the 'toxic mix' faced by MPs who are 'risk-takers to one degree or another. Usually in the areas of money, sex, political opportunism.' According to the newspapers he also provided her with detailed versions of the sexual activity he desired to share with her.

Leadsom

A certain source of relief for the Tories in their struggle was the defeat, in

the next election round, of Michael Gove. Which left Theresa May as the favourite for the final ballot, challenged by Andrea Leadsom, the MP for South Northampton and Minister of State for Energy, who emerged as a formidably forceful opponent when sounding off in a succession of TV debates from the base of her claiming a high-rank career in banking, finance and the like. Except that there were some inconsistencies behind all that power and assertion. Her present strong opposition to British membership of the European Union was in contrast to her previous stance; in April 2013 she was clear that to leave would be '...a disaster for our economy and it would lead to a decade of economic and political uncertainty'. There were also serious questions about her record of her previous work status; in one typical case former colleagues of hers described her claims as 'categorically not true' and 'just ludicrous'. At the same time she was busy reminding us that she is a mother of three in contrast to Theresa May who is childless: 'She possibly has nieces, nephews, lots of people, but I have children who are going



Crabb



Leadsome

to have children who will directly be a part of what happens next... I feel that being a mum means you have a very real stake in the future of our country, a tangible stake'.

But her assumed experience had not developed any suitable sensitivity or any alarm that it would help May gain votes. Among the media she was re-named 'Andrea Loathsom'. But she was unable to carry on her campaign and withdrew in favour of May. And now May has promised, from the door of Number Ten that her government will be driven '...not by the interests of the privileged few but by yours'. Which would be a lot more impressive if it did not remind us of Thatcher on the very same spot in May 1979, declaring that 'Where there is discord may we bring harmony. Where there is error may we bring truth. Where there is doubt may we bring faith....' To put it another way, we have been here before and as long as this society continues with its exploited people we shall have to be here again.

IVAN

MATERIAL WORLD



Beijing, August 2015. Photos taken from the same spot within days of each other. The one on the left was taken after two days of constant rain. The view on the right is more usual.



Socialism - a breath of fresh air

NEARLY A quarter of all human deaths is caused by pollution. Contaminated water, polluted air, chemical waste, climate change, and UV radiation kill 12.6 million people annually, says a new report from the World Health Organization (WHO). The worst affected are children, the poor, and the elderly, WHO has found. 'If countries do not take actions to make environments where people live and work healthy, millions will continue to become ill and die too young,' said Dr. Margaret Chan, the WHO director-general.

Many environmentalist activists advocate lifestyle changes implying that it is the individual who is personally responsible for climate change. It suggests that we are each personally responsible for the pollution and should share in the sense of guilt. One of the greatest weaknesses of the mainstream environmental movement has been its failure or refusal to identify capitalism as the root problem.

Coal India has 175 open-cast mines and production from open-cast mines during 2014-15 was 92.91percent of total production. Why open-cast mining when it is environmentally destructive and harmful to the people living in the locality? Because it requires less investment and less time to extract coal. Those who believe that the threat to the environment can be dealt with by a person's life-style choices are hopelessly wrong. The energy industry is a leading source of pollution – including sulphur and nitrogen compounds – that cause breathing difficulties in vulnerable people, including children and older people, and can lead to premature death. Energy production and use account for about 85 percent of particulate matter and almost all of the sulphur oxides and nitrogen oxides. Traffic pollution although

still important in developed countries, causing a fifth of deaths, caused only 5 percent of deaths across the globe as a whole. Air pollution from power stations, mainly coal-burning plants, was significant globally, causing one in seven deaths. It is the biggest single factor in the US, causing a third of the 55,000 annual deaths, compared to 16 percent in the UK. It is not you or your neighbours but the business interests which control the corporations which run the industries that produces most of the pollution.

The global air pollution crisis is killing more than 6 million people a year. Air quality has been identified as the fourth-largest threat to human health, after high blood pressure, poor diet and smoking. A report in February from the Royal College of Physicians which blamed air pollution both inside and outside homes for at least 40,000 deaths a year in the UK. It took just eight days for London to fail its air quality limits for the entire year and this near-invisible pollution kills up to 9,000 people a year in London. Richard Howard, at the think-tank Policy Exchange, found that a Londoner's life expectancy is cut by about 16 months by air pollution with poorer neighbourhoods the worst affected. Air pollution is estimated to reduce the life expectancy of everyone in the UK by an average of six months.

Capitalists are not overly concerned with ending pollution. The existence of every business is based on its ability to make more profits than the next capitalist. If the cost of reducing cuts into their profits no real steps toward halting pollution will be taken. Capitalists are not about to reduce their profits for anybody. They haven't to provide full employment or to avoid wars so there's no reason to expect them to do

so in order to tackle pollution. Capitalism is all about the insatiable pursuit of profit and it is accompanied by tremendous waste and pollution. If there are profits to be gained, capitalists are not too bothered by the long-term, or even short-term, consequences for other people or future generations. Political leaders lecture about the need to address environmental problems, while turning a blind eye to the role played by this rapacious system of profit chasing. Capitalism is a blind process of profit accumulation. Too many people want to preserve those profits while preserving the environment. It cannot be done. Capitalism doesn't take any notice if the air is noxious and if another technology is 'cleaner' - unless the 'dirty' option becomes unprofitable. The capitalists are waiting for a time when renewables are more profitable than fossil fuels.

Many socialists seek the ideal of a 'gardened' planet cared for by those that live on it. We no longer seek to conquer and dominate nature but to live in harmony and in symbiotic relationships with the world around us. Socialists are environmentalists who seek a non-exploitative economic system that permits co-operation and collaboration between people, and that recognises the mutual benefits when we also fully understand the responsibilities of our stewardship of the Earth. Our society and our way of life need to be in harmony with nature, not always battling against it, because in a war against the planet and nature there can only be one winner, and it will not be us. In the long run, humanity's greatest resource lies in the innovative intelligence of our species. Our problem is how to establish a society in which this intelligence can find its full expression for human needs.

ALJO

Capitalism *for the workers?*

Pull the other one!

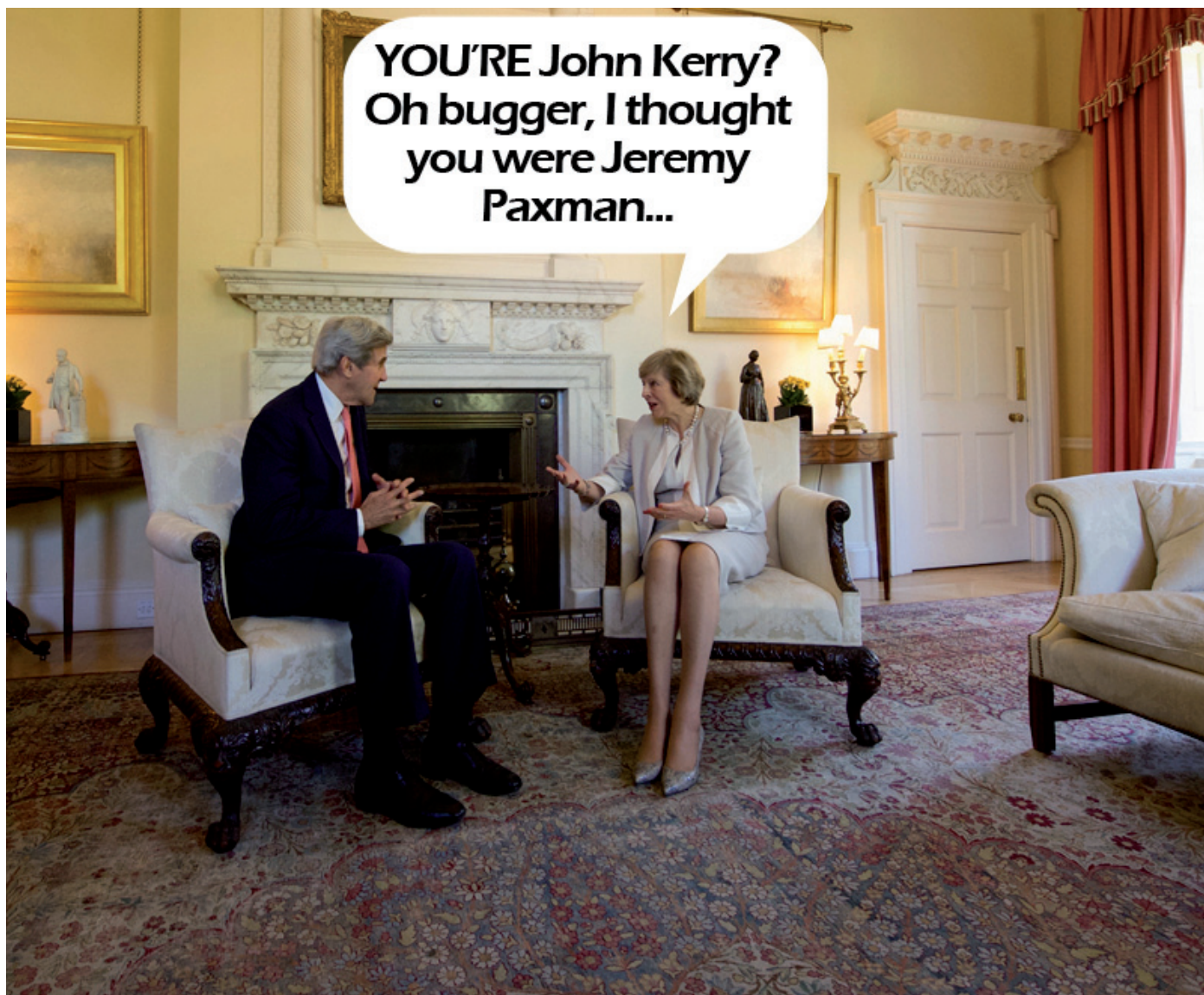
In her first speech as Prime Minister, outside Number 10, Theresa May assured those from ‘an ordinary working class family’ that she understood their problems and that ‘the government I lead will be driven not by the interests of the privileged few but by yours’.

That would be a turn up for the books for a Tory government. The Tory Party’s role has always been, precisely, to govern more or less consciously in the interest of the rich. But, to get into office to do this, they need the votes of ‘ordinary’ members of the majority class of wage and salary earners and their dependants who make up the great bulk of the electorate. Hence such empty promises and pie-crust pledges.

Governing in the interest of the working class (and May

used the term twice in her speech) is impossible for any government as this simply cannot be done under capitalism. Capitalism is based on the ownership and control of the means of production by a ‘privileged few’ and production for the market with a view to profit, the source of their high incomes and privileged lifestyle.

Capitalism runs on profits. Any government, whatever its intentions, has to respect this and give priority to profits and conditions for profit-making, unless they want to provoke an economic crisis and slump. This means putting profit-making before meeting the needs of ‘ordinary working-class families’. All governments have done – have had to do – this, some Tory governments with relish, some Labour governments reluctantly, but they’ve all done it.



The most recent example is the governments of which May herself has been a leading member for the past six years which have been imposing austerity on the 'non-privileged many', cutting benefits and slashing services while at the same time reducing corporation tax on profits.

In a speech to the 2013 Tory Party Conference May had already talked of 'reforming capitalism and making sure our economy works for all of us.' Launching her campaign to become Tory Leader, in Birmingham on 10 July, she returned to this theme, criticising certain business practices such as inflated executive pay and bonuses and advocating what the papers called a 'socially responsible capitalism' (as in the *Financial Times* headline the following day: 'Theresa May calls for responsible capitalism in pitch for Number 10').

This, too, is a pipe-dream, not to say a contradiction in terms. Some individual capitalists do sometimes exaggerate and have to be reined in, but capitalism cannot be 'socially responsible', i.e. responsible to society as a whole. It is a profit-driven system that can only work in the interest of the privileged few who are the profit-takers.

Exchanging rhetoric

In saying her government will govern in the interest of the working class May has stolen the Labour Party's rhetoric, as it is Labour that has specialised in claiming to be the workers' party, out to govern in their interest. But there is a certain fairness in this, as the pre-Corbyn Labour Party had taken to stealing the Tories' rhetoric.

In his bid to become Labour leader in 2010 Ed Miliband wrote about building 'a different model – a capitalism that works for the people and not the other way round' (*Guardian*, 29 August 2010 under the headline 'I'll make capitalism work for the people'). He became Labour leader but never got the chance to fail in this doomed venture. Later, Labour's shadow Business Secretary, Chuka Umunna, was going around calling for a 'more responsible' and a 'better capitalism' (just Google 'Umunna' + 'better capitalism').

The reason given by the majority of Labour MPs for wanting to depose Corbyn is their perception that, with him as leader, the Labour Party is unelectable and so cannot, as some of them have been tearfully proclaiming, get into a position where it can govern in the interest of – of course – the working class. Are they any more sincere – or insincere – than May? Not that it matters. It is not a question of sincerity but of what is practicably possible, and it is not possible to govern capitalism in the interest of the majority class of wage and salary workers.

Gradual transformation

Corbyn and his supporters, too, stand for a form of capitalism though they don't overtly express themselves in that way. They stand for a more state-directed capitalist economy which they call, in the tradition of Old Labour, 'socialism.' But it's still capitalism and still would not work in the interest of the working class. They have, however, forced some of their opponents to fight on their terrain.

Corbyn's challenger, Welsh MP Owen Smith, has even described himself as a 'Bevanite', after a left-wing ginger group in the Labour Party in the 1950s led by Aneurin Bevan (before he eventually became reconciled with the Labour leadership and its policies, supporting the British H-bomb on the grounds that, if he were Foreign Secretary, he wouldn't want to go naked into the conference chamber).

Another Welsh one-time firebrand, Neil Kinnock, in a secretly recorded intervention at a meeting of Labour MPs on 4 July, even used the S-word:

'In 1918, in the shadow of the Russian revolution, they made

a deliberate, conscious, ideological choice, that they would not pursue the syndicalist road, that they would not pursue the revolutionary road – it was a real choice in those days. They would pursue the parliamentary road to socialism' (*Guardian*, 8 July).

His emphasis was more on 'the parliamentary road' than on 'socialism', but he did make a relevant historical point. The Labour Party has never been committed to syndicalism as the doctrine that the best way to get improvements for workers under capitalism and eventually to overthrow it is by trade union action. Nor, even less, to 'revolution' in the sense of the armed insurrection advocated by the Bolsheviks. In fact, the Labour Party has never been committed to revolution in any sense, but only – and openly – to the gradual reform of capitalism into socialism (actually, state capitalism) through a long series of Acts of Parliament.

The ironic thing is that this is what Corbyn and McDonnell stand for, in opposition to talk of accepting capitalism as it is and trying to make it work better than the Tories. It is certainly not what a majority of Labour MPs stand for. But their approach historically didn't work. Instead of the Labour Party gradually transforming capitalism into something else, it was the experience of governing capitalism that transformed the Labour Party into a mere alternative management team to the Tories for British Capitalism plc.

We don't suppose many workers will be fooled by May's promise to govern in their interest but a number still are and will be by the Labour Party's. They shouldn't be. Both the Labour Party and the Tory Party stand for capitalism, and no government, not even one under Corbyn, can make capitalism work for the working class.

ADAM BUICK





Hillsborough

The former Liverpool chief executive Peter Robinson presided over Liverpool Football Club during their most successful period, the mid-1960s to the 1980s. He was well known for his shrewdness and informal management style. It's only with hindsight we learn, that on the 20 March 1989, he telephoned Steve Clarke, the competitions secretary of the Football Association and urged him not to stage the upcoming FA cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest at Hillsborough, and suggested Old Trafford, as a more suitable venue. Clarke returned his call later that morning to say that 'the committee had selected Hillsborough' and 'the police would not agree to the allocation being altered' either (the *i* newspaper, 28 April).

The most striking thing about the vast body of evidence gathered on the Hillsborough disaster is that the English game's governing body (the FA) has, from the immediate aftermath of the disaster never acknowledged that it made a disastrously bad call by failing to heed Robinson's advice about the inadequacy of Sheffield Wednesday's ground. Graham

Kelly, the former FA chief executive, drafted an initial six-page report two days afterwards, but there is no indication that he was looking to investigate how the venue, which did not have a safety certificate, had been chosen. The document also reveals the FA's overwhelming preoccupation after Hillsborough was with covering its own back and getting the story straight.

96 people aged from 10 to 67 years old died at the stadium, in the ambulances, or shortly after arrival at hospital. A total of 766 people suffered injuries of some kind. On 19 April, the death toll reached 95 when 14-year-old Lee Nicol died in hospital after his life support machine was switched off. This total rose to 96 when artificial feeding and hydration were withdrawn from 22-year-old Tony Bland after nearly four years, during which he had remained in a persistent vegetative state. This followed a legal challenge in the High Court by his family to have his treatment withdrawn, a landmark challenge which succeeded in November 1992.

On the 10th anniversary in 1999, at least three people who

survived were known to have committed suicide as a result of the emotional problems brought on by the disaster. Another survivor had spent eight years in psychiatric care. Numerous cases of alcoholism and drug abuse were also attributed to lingering effects from the disaster, and it contributed to the collapse of a number of marriages involving people who had witnessed the events.

Professor Scraton was an important member of the Hillsborough Independent Panel (2010-2012) and primary author of *Hillsborough: The Report of the Independent Panel* (2012). He provided extensive submissions to the 1997-1998 judicial scrutiny undertaken by Lord Justice Stuart-Smith. These submissions included disclosure of the 'review and alteration' of police officers' statements. Following negotiations he eventually accessed and researched all police statements in their original and altered form in the House of Lords Reading Room. Professor Scraton has remained highly critical of the Stuart-Smith scrutiny, describing it as a 'debacle'.

Scraton's book *Hillsborough: The Truth* is widely accepted as a definitive account of the disaster and its aftermath. It focuses on the inadequacies of the police investigations, official inquiries and inquests, and reveals the extent of the systematic review and alteration of South Yorkshire Police statements. It also details the treatment of the bereaved and survivors in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, and the 'inhumanity' of the body identification process.

Following the 20th anniversary of the disaster in 2009, the government gave a commitment to the full disclosure of all documents relating to Hillsborough, appointing the Hillsborough Independent Panel to manage the process of the disclosure and to produce a report explaining the work of the Panel illustrating how its work added to the public's understanding of the disaster. Professor Scraton was appointed as a member of the Panel. He led the Panel's research team, based at Queen's University Belfast. In a parliamentary debate following the publication of the Panel's Report, Scraton's work was commended in parliament by Andy Burnham, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, as 'a huge service not just to the Hillsborough families but to this country'. The Report led directly to: the quashing of the 96 inquest verdicts of 'accidental death' and the ordering of new inquests by the Attorney General; a full investigation by the Independent Police Complaints Authority; and a full criminal investigation.

Sir John Goldring was appointed as Assistant Coroner for South Yorkshire (East) and West Yorkshire (West) to conduct the new inquest. On 26 April, the inquest jury returned a verdict of unlawful killing in respect of all 96 victims. In 2012-13, Scraton received the Queen's University Vice-Chancellor's inaugural award for research impact. In May 2016 the Mayor of Liverpool, Joe Anderson, announced that Phil Scraton was to be given the Freedom of the City in recognition of his work, spanning twenty five years, on the Hillsborough tragedy.

This tragedy has been looked at from many perspectives including the police, the judiciary, newspaper reportage and the families fighting for justice. But what about the typical Liverpool fan? Peter has been a Liverpool supporter for over 50 years. Conscious of the campaigns for the past 27 years but not emotionally involved like families and friends of the 96 killed, he attended the 20th anniversary memorial service at Anfield and witnessed the 'Justice for the 96' chant when Andy Burnham was attempting to speak that moved him to take the campaign back to government.

When lies were being told almost immediately after the disaster, he struggled to believe them and even when some were convincingly refuted, he didn't imagine the conspiracy was as deep and widespread as it turned out. As the years passed he still felt for the families, admired them, but did not

forget them because LFC fans would not let that happen.

The second inquest that took over two years was important because it allowed the personal stories that were not heard previously to be told, and helped families to grieve, knowing more clearly what had happened to their loved ones. In Liverpool when the verdicts were announced, the emotions could be felt throughout the City, culminating in a huge gathering in front of the famous St George's Hall.

Peter is proud of the families and all connected with the campaign, their dignity, perseverance etc. He is proud to be a scouser in the fullest sense, noting that the other Merseyside team, Everton were also united in grief, along with much of the football world –with tributes coming from Dortmund and Villarreal fans.

Although still appalled at the tactics and behaviour of police and other institutions that tried to justify the lies and cover ups, he is delighted that after 27 years, a serious injustice has been put right, giving hope to other long campaigns, such as the Orgreave miners who were also victims of the South Yorkshire Police. We hope that their fight is taken as seriously.

KEVIN



Average workers (whatever they call themselves – artisans, ‘middle-class’, whatever) work hard all their lives and end up with not much more than when they started. The system is rigged to bring about that result. (It is based on the majority not owning enough to avoid having to work for an employer for a living.) But whenever they have a chance to vote, they vote to perpetuate the system. A clear case of turkeys voting for Christmas. Now why should that happen?

Why do we behave as we do?

Various experiments which were carried out by psychologists at some American universities in the twentieth century may indicate possible answers.

Solomon Asch and social compliance

In 1951 Solomon Asch, a professor at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, organized what he called tests of visual judgement. He organized groups of students, eight males in each group. Every group was given two cards: one card had a line drawn on it, and the second card had three lines, a, b, and c. They were asked to decide which of the three lines, a, b, and c, was nearest in length to the single line on the first card. The answer was never difficult: each time one of the lines (whether it was a, b, or c), was clearly the same length as the first card’s line. However, there was a ‘hidden agenda’. Everyone in the group (except one person) knew that the real reason for all this activity was to see how far this single oblivious person would be able to hold to his own (correct) opinion when all the others in the group unanimously chose the wrong answer. Each time it was so arranged that this one unaware person gave his answer last (or next to last). A number of tests were held. The first few times everyone gave the correct answer, and the ‘guinea pig’ had no difficulty in agreeing. But then there came a test when as pre-arranged all the members of the group gave the wrong answer. So when it came to the ‘guinea pig’, he either had to give an obviously incorrect answer, which meant he was agreeing with all the others, or he had to be brave enough to stand out on his own, which meant appearing to criticize what all the others had said. Each group had eighteen tests; in six tests the group’s members all gave the correct answer, so the ‘guinea pig’ would have less reason to be suspicious, or think it was odd that the others were always wrong. The other twelve tests were the ‘critical trials’, where all the group-members, except the ‘guinea pig’, gave the (same) wrong answer; this showed whether the ‘guinea pig’ was self-reliant enough to give the obviously correct answer, or meekly submitted to what everyone else thought. More than one-third of the time the ‘guinea pigs’ simply accepted the group consensus, though that meant going along with a palpable error. (And there was never any significant doubt about what the correct answer was.) Three-quarters of the ‘guinea pigs’ gave at least one answer that they knew to be wrong during the critical trials.

Such are the results of the deep-seated desire in most people to be socially amenable. Afterwards, when the real nature of the tests was revealed, most of the ‘guinea pigs’ who gave incorrect answers said they did not really believe what they said, but they went along with the group “for fear of being ridiculed or thought ‘peculiar’”.

Stanley Milgram and obedience

When you look at some of the gigantic atrocities of the twentieth century, you feel that if you tried to describe them to people who had never heard of them, you wouldn’t be believed. Would German workers, employed on the railways, calmly transport closed cattle trucks with thousands of Jews (and others) to concentration camps, where other German workers would obediently usher them to their deaths in the gas chambers? Or take the famine of 1932-3 in the Ukraine, North Caucasus, etc, which Stalin imposed to punish the peasants who were reluctant to enter collective farms: surely Russian workers (even when put into uniform as soldiers) wouldn’t confiscate all the remaining food in an area when they knew the locals would die of starvation? But that’s exactly what happened. Hitler probably killed between ten and twelve million people in the early 1940s: Stalin’s famine killed six to eight million, besides more millions in the Great Purge, the gulags and so on. (The British ruling class decided that British workers would fight valiantly on the same side as Stalin in the Second World War; many British ships were lost, and sailors

Solomon Asch



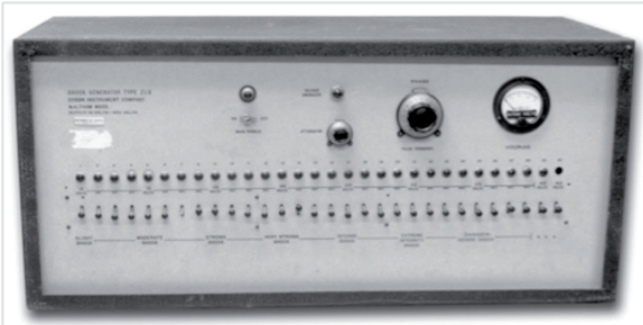
drowned, in the ‘Arctic convoys’ taking supplies to Murmansk in north Russia.)

Of course many thousands of apparently ordinary citizens were involved in the slaughters organized by both Hitler and Stalin; and another American, Professor Milgram at Yale University, carried out some experiments in the 1960s in an attempt

to discover how this could have happened. He advertised for volunteers, who were paid a modest sum for their time, to take part in what he called a learning experiment. These outsiders were each paired with a participant, who really knew what was happening; in each pair one was called a teacher, and one was called a learner. Apparently this was decided by the toss of a coin, but in fact Milgram fixed it so that the outsider was always the teacher, who thought it was a genuine educational exercise, while the learner was a participant. The teacher and the learner were divided by a screen. The teacher, and another participant called a researcher, who was an authoritative figure in a white lab coat, watched while the



Above: Stanley Milgram. Below: a 'shock-box' as used in his experiment



learner had electrodes fastened to his arms. The teacher and the researcher then retired to a neighbouring position, which was out of sight of the learner, but not out of hearing. There the teacher sat down in front of an 'electric shock generator', with a row of switches each of which was clearly labelled from 15 volts, 'slight shock', right up in stages to 450 volts, 'danger, severe shock'. The teacher then asked the learner a series of fairly straightforward questions: which of four words was most closely associated with another given word. The learners kept getting the answers wrong; and each time they did so, the teacher had to administer an electric shock. At each successive wrong answer, the teacher had to give (as he believed) an increased shock. Of course there was no shock in fact, but the learner gave increasing signs of discomfort, going up to screams and agonized shouts of 'get me out of here' as the supposed voltage intensified. The teacher naturally became increasingly uneasy, but the researcher kept telling him he must continue, in a predetermined series of official-sounding statements, each successive one more strongly phrased. In the basic original experiment, all the teachers went up to pressing the 300-volt switch, and two-thirds of them pressed the (as they believed) 450-volt switch, 'danger, severe shock', despite the sounds of anguish coming from the learner.

The original experiment was subsequently repeated with several different adjustments, to try and find the elements most significant in persuading the teacher to abandon his natural, basic human reluctance to harm another human being, whom he scarcely knew. If the researcher told the

teacher that he continued on his own responsibility, the voltage reached was much less; if the researcher said he (the researcher) would take responsibility, the voltage reached was higher. When the researcher wore ordinary clothes, rather than the impressive lab coat, the voltage reached was lower. When the researcher was not actually present, but gave his orders or comments over the telephone, the voltage reached was lower; the same thing happened when the experiment took place in some rundown offices, rather than in the impressive surroundings of Yale University. All these elements, the evasion of responsibility, the persuasive costume, the physical presence, and the imposing environment, all helped to transform an ordinary human being into someone who was prepared to inflict great pain on another individual who was a stranger to him, and against whom he could have had no personal animus. Milgram said: "The extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding attention." In fact, 'ordinary people are likely to follow orders given by an authority figure, even to the extent of killing an innocent human being. Obedience to authority is ingrained in us all from the way we were brought up'.

Philip Zimbardo and the prison environment

Later still Professor Zimbardo, of Stanford University, became interested in the psychology of prisoners, and organized the Stanford prison experiment. This was funded by the U.S. Office of Naval Research, which wanted (somewhat naively) to know more about the causes of conflict between military guards and prisoners. According to one website, Zimbardo was 'interested in finding out whether the brutality reported among guards in American prisons was due to the sadistic personalities of the guards (i.e. dispositional) or had more to do with the prison environment (i.e. situational)'. Zimbardo advertised for male college students, offering a small daily fee. More than seventy applicants were given searching interviews and tests to weed out any with psychological problems, medical disabilities, or any history of crime or drug abuse. Twenty-four were chosen, and were divided into nine prison guards and nine prisoners (with six reserves) by the random toss of a coin. A lifelike jail was built in the basement of the psychology building, with three cells (each with three cots) equipped with heavy barred doors, and a cubby hole to punish prisoners with solitary confinement. A corridor was used as a yard for exercise, and there was a large more luxurious room for the guards. Those designated prisoners were arrested at their homes by the local police force, and processed like all arrestees: handcuffed and searched, booked, finger-printed, a mug-shot taken, and put in a holding cell. All this, said Zimbardo, so the prisoners would suffer the 'police procedure which makes arrestees feel confused, fearful, and dehumanised'. At the Stanford 'prison' the prisoners were stripped naked, searched, and deloused: standard treatment in U.S. prisons, no doubt designed as a first dose of the continuous degradation which God's own country inflicts on its prisoners. The guards wore khaki uniforms, boots, and mirror sunglasses to prevent eye contact; each had a whistle and a police truncheon. The prisoners wore shapeless smocks and rubber sandals, and were given numbers by which they were always known: both guards and prisoners were forbidden to use names.

An attempted prisoner rebellion on day two was met with spray from a fire extinguisher, with prisoners stripped and losing their mattresses. The further into the experiment, the harsher the guards' behaviour, the more rigorous the punishments they doled out. For example, sometimes

prisoners were not allowed to wash or clean their teeth, were not given food, or were made to do many press-ups on the floor; or they were made to clean the toilet with their bare hands. Later, visits to the toilet were cancelled altogether, with prisoners forced to urinate and defecate into a bucket in the cell – and they were not allowed to empty the bucket. The smell became all-pervasive. Zimbardo said, ‘In only a few days our guards became sadistic and our prisoners became depressed and showed signs of extreme stress . . . as for the guards, we realized how ordinary people could be readily transformed from the good Dr Jekyll to the evil Mr Hyde’ (though none of the guards had shown any sadistic tendencies before the experiment). The prisoners themselves became submerged in their roles, applying for “parole” rather than simply walking out. One prisoner had a nervous breakdown after only thirty-six hours, with ‘uncontrollable bursts of screaming, crying, and anger’; he had to leave the experiment. ‘Within the next few days three others also had to leave after showing signs of emotional disorder that could have had lasting consequences.’ (And all of them had been pronounced particularly stable and normal a short while before.) If they had really been prisoners, they would have had to stay in jail. The exercise showed ‘how prisons dehumanise people, turning them into objects and instilling in them feelings of hopelessness’.

One visitor, a woman who later became Zimbardo’s wife, questioned the morality of the whole exercise. She said that the treatment of the prisoners had become disgraceful (she was the only one among fifty visitors who said that), and

the experiment – originally scheduled for two weeks – was stopped after only six days. All the prisoners were glad it was over, but ‘most of the guards were upset that the study was terminated prematurely’. In fact during the exercise ‘no guard ever came late for his shift, called in sick, left early, or demanded extra pay for overtime work’. Two months later one guard gave an interview: ‘I thought I was incapable of this kind of behaviour. I was surprised and dismayed that I could act in such an unaccustomed way’.

In psychological terms, the brutality displayed at Stanford was situational, rather than dispositional.

Who gets the extra biscuit?

One last experiment; several groups, each consisting of three students from Berkeley University, California, were put in a room and given a complex subject to debate. Randomly, one of the three was picked as ‘leader’. After a time, each group was given a plate of four biscuits. In every case, without anyone objecting or even discussing it, the ‘leader’ ate the extra biscuit. By pure chance, one student had achieved a ‘sense of entitlement’, which was never questioned (*Times*, 28 April).

All of us who live in a capitalist society have to accept that our behaviour is shaped by that society. If anyone feels that the conduct shown in these well-known experiments is acceptable, he or she will no doubt continue to support capitalist society. But some people work for a different society, with different – and preferable – behaviour.

ALWYN EDGAR

Equality, Not Sameness

‘You can’t have a world of equality,’ it is sometimes said, ‘because people differ. They differ in ability, energy, creativity. A world where everyone was forced to be equal simply wouldn’t work.’

Socialists want a society of equality, but that emphatically does not mean we want a world where everybody is the same. People do indeed differ, in terms of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, any disabilities and so on. We do not all have the capability to be a Beethoven, Dickens, Picasso or Einstein; but that is not an argument against equality.

So what do socialists mean by equality? Firstly, everyone will have the same kind of access to the goods and services produced in socialism. This will mean free access to, at the very least, the basic needs of human beings: food, housing, clothes, heating, household goods, travel, education, leisure time. Nobody will live in a thirty-room mansion, and equally nobody will live in a slum. Nobody will have to choose between eating and heating, or put off getting a new coat or pair of shoes. Secondly, everyone’s opinion will be equal in terms of deciding what should be done or how resources should be allocated. This does not imply that people will be voting all the time or spending hour after hour in meetings: it just means that there will be no power-

hierarchies and nobody being ordered around. There will still have to be organisation, of course, but work will be made as safe and satisfying and comradesly as possible.

Where, then, does this leave the point that people are different? There is an old saying, ‘It takes all sorts to make a world – fortunately’. People have a diverse range of interests and abilities, and in socialism they will be able to develop and make use of these in ways simply not possible under capitalism. People may be interested in railways or computers or pottery or carpentry or chemistry, and they will be in a position to use these abilities to help meet human need. They may discover new abilities that are never explored under the present narrow system. Presumably there will still be top novelists, musicians and scientists, some with famous names, but no celebrity culture as now.

Further, it need not follow that socialist society would be exactly the same everywhere. There will very likely be differences in language, and in tastes in music, food and clothing in different parts of the world. We cannot predict this now but we certainly do not envisage a bland uniformity. And no doubt people will want to express their individual styles and preferences in lots of different ways.

So equality does not imply sameness or identity, just a democratic society where people have the same amount of control over their lives, and where creativity can truly flourish without the encumbrances of class and the profit motive.

PB



Catharsis, Capitalism and Commodification

It was once believed, and still is by some, that one of the services to the community provided by the arts was that of 'catharsis'. This process, which through identification with character and circumstance enables the audience to give expression to powerful emotions, was said to be socially beneficial because it purged possible destructive feelings and so enabled us to be more rational in our 'real lives'.

Within the dramas performed on TV, cinema, radio, theatre and in novels the creator/s would consider it to be a failure if they were unsuccessful in creating a level of emotional identification within their audience. Indeed the 'suspension of disbelief' which enables us to overlook the artifice of whatever medium the story takes place within would be impossible without such an engagement. This is not to devalue any rational content within the narrative but without this emotional dimension any story would become very 'dry' and the possibility of aesthetic or polemical communication could be compromised.

Today many see any emotional manipulation of the audience as problematic. One of the tenets of 'realism' within the arts was to minimise the levels of any kind of manipulation by the artist. So we have a dialectical relationship between those who believe that one of the purposes of art is to create catharsis (using techniques of emotional manipulation) to communicate and others who believe that doing so always ends up with escapist entertainment and/or ideological propaganda. Socialists are sometimes accused of being somewhat 'dry' with our insistence on reason and logic within political discourse; does this, then, necessarily inhibit us when participating in the arts?

Story-telling would appear to be an essential activity for our species. A toddler can be seen to throw its most beloved toy away so it can celebrate its return both emotionally and intellectually. Emotionally it enables the child to develop a coping mechanism for the inevitable traumatic experiences in life (the absence of the mother for instance) by representing a controlled drama that emphasises verbal response. Intellectually these utterances and the activities they represent are a first example of narrative or 'story' for the infant. An adult will indulge in similar behaviour by watching the same film repeatedly or listening to the same piece of music or attending the theatre to watch different interpretations of the same play etc. We embrace these vicarious pleasures to learn socially and emotionally how to deal with the vicissitudes of existence.

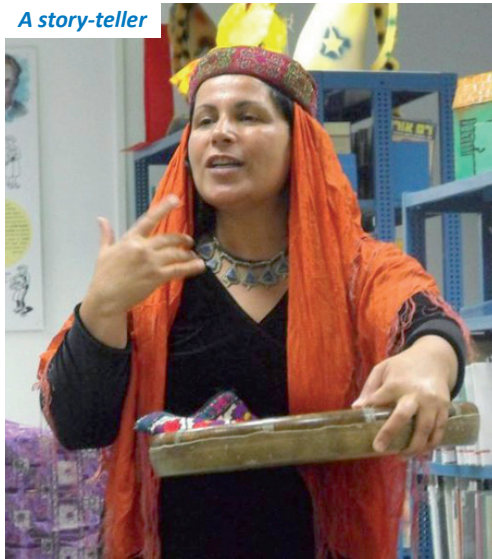
There are, however, some stories that are not primarily motivated by such artistic ambitions but exist merely to distract, entertain and sell. Advertising and marketing are exclusively concerned with the manipulation of narratives to this end. They will use all of the techniques developed for the arts and pervert them for their own base needs. Some may object to this description by observing that within consumer capitalism this kind of distinction is almost impossible since all art has become a commodity with a view to a sale. Contemporary audiences like to believe that their sophisticated understanding of the media counters this kind of manipulation and, therefore, they are not susceptible to emotional identification and subsequent catharsis.

Unfortunately this can lead to a level of cynicism that prevents the distinction between art of value and the sea of superficiality that surrounds it. Perhaps an understanding of the artist and his motivation can help.

Someone once suggested to me, in my role as a DJ, that I might occasionally play the music that we know is most popular; music that the audiences like rather than what I liked. My response was to say that when I attended a gig I went there to hear what the performers wanted to play as I already knew what I liked. When an artist starts to compromise his/her work with attempts to conform to commercial pressures in a misguided attempt at *entertainment* then creativity can cease. Such is the corrosive nature of our culture that sometimes this compromise happens without the artist ever being aware of it. Their core audience disappears leaving them with little else than a celebrity facade that they are trapped within evermore.

Art has to challenge its audience otherwise it is not worthy of the name. This *avant-garde* quality switches from one media to another depending on the historical context. Anyone who denies this as a defining element within art has

A story-teller



succumbed to the cynicism inherent within the commodified entertainment system which is as culturally dead as the anachronistic capitalism that creates it. A knowing cynical smile is as far from catharsis as is possible. Being merely entertained at the cinema,

theatre, concert hall or on television simply serves as a distraction that is as devoid of meaning as is the empty theatre you leave behind after the performance, the floor scattered with the ephemera representing the price of admission.

Is it possible to get emotionally involved (catharsis) in a work of art but still retain a rational and critical perspective? Whilst immersed in 'film studies' some thought it might destroy the magic of the movies for me. On the contrary I found that the knowledge of how artifice is created enhanced my appreciation of the work. Indeed without a critique of both content and technique art would remain opaque and superficial. The term 'I know what I like' invariably implies the opposite; an uncritical perspective leaves the individual subject to novelty and distraction that represents the antithesis to art. That we are all occasionally misled into according value to something we later come to see as devoid of artistic merit is merely an acknowledgement of the ability

to make mistakes. When we love something (or for that matter someone) it is very hard to accept a damning critique based on evidence we know to be true. Therein lies the importance of a good critique;



Advertising: "manipulating narratives"

it can reveal vicarious manipulation beneath seemingly profound emotions and mere empty rhetoric that can underlie pseudo-intellectual sub-textual messages.

Don't let any of this dissuade you from grabbing your popcorn and indulging in catharsis at your local movie theatre. Just be aware, as the lyrics to a cheesy but wonderful western theme starring the arch reactionary John Wayne say:

'There are more things in life than the things we can see' (especially on the silver screen).

WEZ

OBITUARY

Alan Coombes

It is with deepest regret that we have to tell you of the passing of our much esteemed Comrade Alan Coombes. Alan was a very staunch member of the World Socialist Party of New Zealand. He was originally from Swindon, Wiltshire, and retained his strong West Country dialect to the end. So you can bet our meetings were more than lively when Alan was in full swing. A few years ago Alan, along with Comrade Gerald Coffee, used to broadcast on Auckland's Community Radio, to try and get the socialist message across. Alan never got anywhere, so eventually we had to give up. So, on behalf of the New Zealand comrades, I will end with this little note – Farewell Dear Comrade, you have at last attained a measure of equality with the 'spongers' of the ruling class. Even with all their accursed wealth they get just 'three score and ten' like the rest of us.

JIM RYDER



Lies, damned lies and statistics

IT IS generally recognised that during the referendum campaign the Brexit side relied on lies – about how much Britain paid to the EU, about how the EU worked, about Turkey being about to join – over and above the usual empty promises of politicians as to how things would be better if they won. The Remain side relied more on misleading statistics.

In April the Treasury released a study purporting to show that a 'Vote to Leave would make British households £4,300 worse off' by 2030 (*Independent*, 18 April). The Remain side immediately translated this into a poster proclaiming '£4300 cost to UK families if Britain leaves the EU'. This figure was misleading because it was based on the assumption that Britain left the single market as well as the EU institutions; which does not have to be, and might well turn out not to be the case.

Also, the £4,300 did not represent how much households would lose, but how much they would fail to gain, the assumption being that if Britain stayed in families would be better off by that amount – an empty politicians' promise as this is not something that the government has the power to deliver or

even predict

Nobody knows what things will be like in 2030 or what will happen in between now and then. This allowed the Brexit side to score a point by ridiculing forecasts as to what things would be like as far as 14 years ahead.

Norman Lamont, a former Tory Chancellor, best known for having to manage Britain's ignominious exit from the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in September 1992, pointed out:

'Few forecasts are right for 14 months, let alone 14 years' (*Guardian*, 18 April).

Ex-Cabinet Minister Iain Duncan-Smith was even more scathing:

'If anybody can tell me they know what the global economy is going to be like over the next year let alone the next ten years I have to say they're either soothsayers or they've got some link with God' (BBC, 16 May).

Both true. Capitalism is an anarchic system in which capitalist firms compete to make as much profit as they can, which leads to ever-repeating boom/slump cycles with the occasional big crash. Added to this is jockeying between states, in furtherance of the economic interests of their capitalists, over trade deals and access to markets and investment outlets, sometimes resulting in war either directly or by proxy.

Taken together, all this makes

the course of global capitalism unpredictable and uncontrollable. Experienced politicians know this but still claim the credit when by chance things are going relatively well when they happen to be in office. When, however, things go badly they resort to saying that they were 'blown off course'. This in fact is an apt metaphor as governments are like the captains of a ship, not just at the mercy of the weather but also having to navigate by sight. They can only react to what capitalism places in their path and which they cannot predict let alone control.

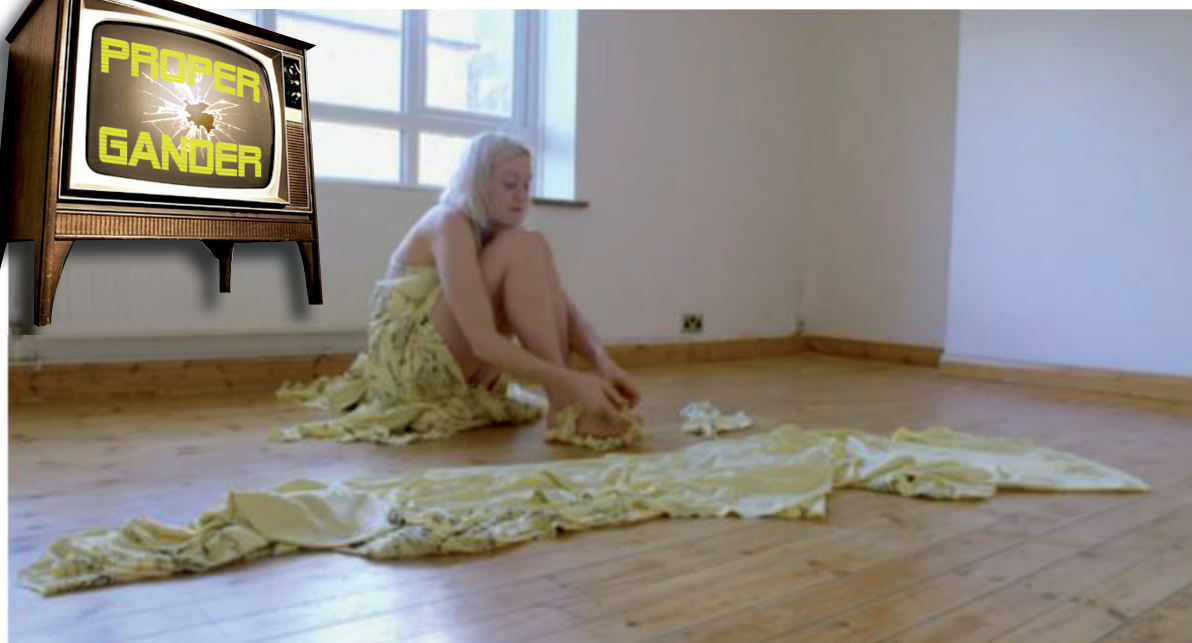
Governments do try to forecast what lies beyond what they can immediately see but, despite the sophisticated models and scenarios, these are

essentially just guesstimates and not to be taken as gospel, as the Remain side encouraged voters to believe. According to Lamont, himself a one-time Chancellor, they don't set much store by them:

'Any Chancellor of the Exchequer who believes economic forecasts needs his head examined' (*City AM*, 27 April).

Remember that the next time a Chancellor in his budget speech trots out statistics about what future growth is going to be.





interested to find out who she really is without her belongings. She's concerned that people won't like her without her jewellery and make-up, and she feels she'll get left behind if she doesn't check social media several times an hour. She says it's 'pretty sad' that she's defined her life by how many Instagram followers she has, aware that there's

Belonging to our belongings

THE USUAL concept behind a 'social experiment' TV show is to throw people into situations outside their usual routines, such as plonking them somewhere remote and seeing how they cope (*Castaway 2000*, *Eden*) or dressing them up in period clothes to live as if they're in a previous era (*The 1900 House* (2000) et al). However much light these programmes shed on how we adapt to different circumstances, there's often a whiff of them being the televisual equivalent of putting a load of cats and dogs in a cage and prodding them with sticks. The grand-daddy of this kind of show is *Big Brother* (2000 onwards), which rapidly degenerated from its almost-anthropological origins into a boring and degrading guessing-game over which of the housemates will shag and/or argue first. Fortunately, *Life Stripped Bare* (channel 4) is much less tawdry, despite being an excuse to film people getting their kit off.

Unlike the above shows, *Life Stripped Bare* doesn't move its participants into a different place to live. Instead, it leaves them in their own homes, but without any of their furniture, appliances, phones, wallets, nick-nacks and, indeed, clothes. All their possessions are boxed up and locked in a storage container nearby, leaving them with just basic food rations. For the first few hours, there's little the naked participants can do except sit awkwardly under similarly bare windows. On each of the following days they can choose just one item to get back from storage. During the experiment's three weeks, they can't buy or borrow anything apart from food and drink, and they must carry on with their daily lives. Afterwards, they'll decide which of their belongings they really want back.

Among participant Heidi's 861 possessions are 31 bikinis and 68 vinyl records. She feels that her 'stuff' defines her, so she's

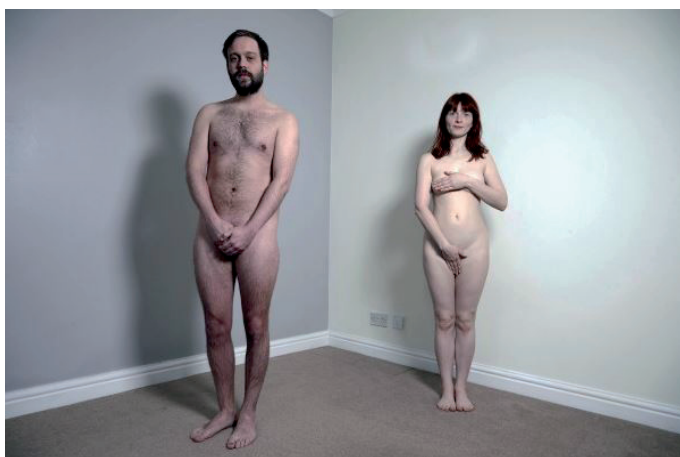
something hollow about her own mindset. Another participant, John, recognises that he's lost the art of conversation because of the amount of time he spends looking at a screen.

Understandably, the first items they choose to get back from storage are clothes, or used to make them. After reclaiming her first few items, Heidi says that the novelty of getting something else back wears off within minutes, whereas at the start she got a high with each reclaimed item: 'The more stuff I get back, the less happy I am'. On day five, Andrew and Georgia choose their phones, while housemate Tom instead picks some socks, saying that having his phone isn't in the spirit of the exercise. A week later he chooses his hitherto under-used piano, wanting to take the opportunity to learn to play it while he has fewer distractions.

After the 21 days, lorries return to the participants' homes and they get their remaining belongings back. The final part of the experiment is to decide how many of them they want to keep. Together, the three households get rid of nearly a third of their possessions, and feel better for de-cluttering. Heidi says she used to feel that she needs belongings to make her who she is, and comes to believe she wasted her time validating her life through social media. She learns to worry less about needing other people's approval, put things more into perspective, and make the most of what she's got.

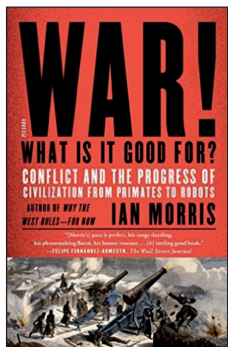
The point of *Life Stripped Bare* isn't to find out how well we can survive with few possessions. It's more about exploring how we relate to what we own. Which of our belongings are most important to us, why, and what do they say about how we feel about ourselves? The relative scarcity of possessions (and the threat of their scarcity) in capitalism underpins our attitudes to what we possess. Owning things represents some kind of security, and we're encouraged to equate success with having lots of stuff. Which particular commodities we own, and the extent to which we define ourselves through them, often hinges on how well they have been marketed to us. What we own also affects how we relate to other people, whether we rely on how we're dressed to win respect or if having phones with social media alienates us as well as brings us together. We've always attached meanings to our belongings, and always will. How we do this depends on the way society mediates between ourselves and what we can own. Capitalism both restricts us and pressurises us into owning stuff, so no wonder there's often something troubling about how we relate to our possessions, as Heidi and the other participants in *Life Stripped Bare* found out. With all the questions the programme raises about our attachments to our belongings, it's ironic that it's sponsored, and by Samsung Home Appliances.

MIKE FOSTER



Good for Nothing

Ian Morris: *War: What is It Good For?* Profile £10.99.



Absolutely nothing, according to the song, but Ian Morris claims here that war has had a much more useful role in human history. It has made people safer, healthier, longer-lived and richer, leading to a society with far less risk of violent death and an enormous expansion in what is produced. The basic argument is that war has resulted in stronger states and a consequent suppression of violence. Hence '[i]n 2010 the planet was more peaceful and prosperous than ever before.'

It is not suggested that all wars have been beneficial in this way, only what Morris calls productive wars, those that accelerated the growth of strong states (which he terms Leviathans after Thomas Hobbes). Many wars have been counter-productive, or at least unproductive, though in terms of those killed these have been far less lethal than the productive wars. Behind all this is the view that, left to themselves and without a big and powerful government to keep them in line, people will be constantly at each other's throats, as supposedly in small-scale societies such as the Stone Age and modern hunter-gatherers. This remains a contentious issue and has been discussed in these pages before (August and September 2014).

On Morris's account, the last five millennia BCE saw productive wars, with rates of violent death falling by up to three quarters as a result. But subsequently the horsemen of the Eurasian steppes prevented the imperial powers from providing proper security for their subjects, which led to the disruption of trade and to troops plundering peasants to make up for the shortfall in their pay from taxes. By the fourteenth century CE, much of Eurasia was under 'feudal anarchy' and casual violence.

Almost a millennium and a half of counter-productive war came to an end, which Morris dates specifically to 1415: not because this was the year of Agincourt but because it was when the Portuguese king started to expand

his rule into Africa, thereby setting off productive intercontinental war. So began five hundred years of European war against the rest of the world, leading to vast colonial empires. It involved the suppression of local wars and banditry and eventually to safer and richer lives, so it was 'the most productive war in history'.

The Second World War was also productive, as it led to the United States taking over as the globocop, a role that Britain was no longer capable of playing. The last chapter is a kind of paean to the military and economic power of the US, which can use overwhelming force to keep other countries in line. But it may only have a few decades left, since drones and robots will take over the fighting, and computerisation will make globocops unnecessary. Until then the world needs a US globocop, a credible Leviathan that will preserve the status quo, whereby people continue to become safer and more prosperous.

As can be seen, this line of argument



Productive? Saint-Lô, Normandy, after allied bombing, 1944

relies on looking at things in the very long run, discounting all the killing and suffering that take place before the 'benefits' emerge. European colonial conquest involved genocide, slavery and massive exploitation, and it is a breathtaking understatement to comment that 'the defeated fared less well than the victors'. There are no references to child labour, but no doubt that could also be categorised as productive, on the grounds that it contributed to the development of capitalism and the profits of the capitalist class.

Class society needs a strong central power to defend the interests of the ruling class and to suppress 'unlicensed' bandits such as the Mafia. There is technological progress due to war, but this is just because resources are directed at this end, not that war is needed for technological advances. War is incredibly wasteful in terms of lives and resources, which could be put instead to meeting human need. Any

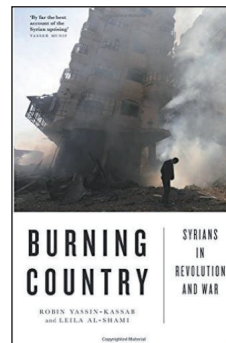
decline in violence is basically due to the cost and difficulty of resisting US global hegemony: 'The essence of U.S. military predominance in the world is, ultimately, the fact that it can, at will, with only a few hours' notice, drop bombs at absolutely any point on the surface of the planet' (David Graeber: *Debt*).

Morris writes that 'we cannot just decide to end war'. What we can do, though, is decide to establish a society in which war is inconceivable. Socialism has been possible for decades, and we do not need wars or globocops or drones to guarantee a society of true peace and well-being.

PB

War in Syria

Robin Yassin-Kassab and Leila Al-Shami, *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*. Pluto Press, 2016.



Of all the countries swept by the 'Arab Spring' of 2011, Syria has been the most unfortunate. The sole response of the Assad regime to peaceful popular protest was ruthless violent

repression, eventually resulting in a devastating many-sided civil war, intervention by rival regional and world powers, and massive flows of refugees within the country and across its borders. The authors have drawn on a variety of sources, including interviews with direct participants in the events, to produce an illuminating and often harrowing account from an anti-authoritarian left-wing perspective.

The book begins with necessary historical background, focusing mainly on the various divisions within Syrian society and on the origin and evolution of the Ba'ath (Arab nationalist) regime under Hafez Assad and then his son Bashar. Chapters 3--4 portray the nonviolent phase of the 'revolution from below'; Chapter 5 explains how resistance to the regime – inevitably under the circumstances – came to assume a primarily military form. Chapter 6 discusses the growth of the initially weak Islamist forces. Chapter 7 ('Dispossession and Exile') describes how millions of Syrians became

refugees. Chapter 8 highlights the cultural renaissance that accompanied the uprising. Chapter 9 deals with the failure of old opponents of the Ba'ath regime inside and outside the country to play a significant role. The last chapter analyzes the attitudes of the international left toward events in Syria. An epilogue brings the story up to date as of October 2015.



Bashar al-Assad

Yassin-Kassab and Al-Shamigive a preview of their analysis in the Preface. In the areas where the government machine broke down ordinary people began to run their own affairs: 'For a few brief moments the people changed everything.'). But then

'the counter-revolutions ground them down. The regime's scorched earth strategy drove millions from the country; those who remained in the liberated zones were forced to focus on survival. Syria became the site of proxy wars, of Sunni-Shia rivalries, of foreign interventions. Iranian and transnational Shia forces backed the regime; foreign Sunni extremists flocked to join the Islamic State... Nobody supported the revolutionaries.'

Note that the authors perceive not one but *two* counter-revolutions – the one represented by the regime and its foreign backers (Iran and later Russia), the other by the Islamic State (IS) and its wealthy patrons in the Gulf States. They even find covert links between these two forces: Assad assisted the growth of Islamism by releasing many Islamist militants from prison. Islamist predominance in the anti-regime camp is very much to the advantage of Assad, enabling him to present himself to a confused world as 'the lesser evil.'

There is evidently widespread bitterness among non-Islamist oppositionists that they have received so

little material and moral support from the West and from the international left. It is true that the slogans of the uprising initially emphasized 'Western ideals' like 'freedom' and 'democracy.' Western politicians, however, are at best ambivalent about *ideals*; what they need is clients who can be trusted to serve the *interests* of the West and its regional allies. There is good reason to doubt the reliability in this capacity of Syrian 'revolutionaries' who, for instance, criticize Assad for insufficient militancy in the face of the Israeli enemy.

As for the international left, most of it – under the influence of its Bolshevik core – is inclined to support ('critically' or otherwise) the Assad regime. That is because 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' – their 'enemy' being not the world capitalist system but merely 'US imperialism' and its Zionist ally. Such is the stance, for example, of the Stop the War Coalition. It is only in the circles of the anti-authoritarian left that Syrian democrats can hope to find sympathy.

Although clearly written and coherently organized, this is a demanding book to read for anyone not already familiar with the complexities of Syrian society and the many political trends and movements within it. But if you want to understand what has been happening in 'the burning country' it is well worth the effort.

STEFAN

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Fashion and Fighting

One First World War poster proclaimed that it was unpatriotic to dress extravagantly during wartime. This was mainly, if not exclusively, aimed at women, of course. Now an exhibition 'Fashion and Freedom' at Manchester Art Gallery looks at some of the ways that the war affected women's clothes and other aspects of their lives.

As one and a half million women joined the industrial workforce, the need for looser clothing became clear, even though there had been plenty of women workers previously. The tight corsets of previous decades were hardly practical, though some changes along such lines were already taking place (and women cotton spinners had worn shifts at work anyway, because of the heat); the war accelerated these changes, rather than initiating them. By the 1920s more women were wearing make-up and sporting simpler dresses with hemlines up to the knee, as well as smoking cigarettes and being able to vote.

The exhibition consists of four sections. Examples of clothes from the first part of the last century are displayed, though one question not raised is whether most of these were the reserve of richer women. Some well-known modern women designers show pieces inspired by working women from the war period. A couple of these make use of the colour yellow, with reference to the way that working with chemicals such as TNT turned women's skin yellow (the disease was known as toxic jaundice, and could be fatal). Also, some fashion students have produced designs of their own, and some short films reflect on changes brought about by the war.

A few miles away at Salford Quays, the Imperial War Museum North is staging a larger exhibition 'Fashion on the Ration', looking at the impact the Second World War had on fashion, primarily but not exclusively that for women. Many people on the home front, perhaps as many as ten million, wore uniforms, for instance for the Auxiliary Fire Service. In some cases these were the first set of new clothes they had ever had. The uniforms of sailors in the Women's Royal Naval Service (the 'Wrens') were apparently seen as particularly smart, though it must be debatable whether this really served to attract more recruits, as is suggested.

To avoid price rises and the poor being unable to afford them, clothes were rationed from June 1941. 'Make-Do and Mend', with clothes being repeatedly



50 Years Ago Rebel's too late

FEW THINGS have more searingly exposed the futility and absurdity of Labour's so-called left wing than their 'revolt' over the government's policies on prices and incomes and Vietnam.

In all the fuss over the revolt, it seemed to escape notice that, not for the first time, the rebels were rather late. The Prices and Incomes Bill was first introduced during the lifetime of the last government; the version which caused Frank Cousins to resign his Ministry is actually milder than the previous one.

On Vietnam, the Wilson government always made clear their support for American actions, including the bombing of the North.

In other words, the present government are simply carrying on the policies of the last. But in between there was the general election; that was the time for the rebels to make their disagreements known.

They might even have resigned from the Labour Party and fought on an independent platform. But they had probably all studied the fate of the Radical Alliance in Hull North. So what did they do? Well here are extracts from the election addresses

of two of the Vietnam rebels:

Hugh Jenkins (Putney): ... we need a longer period of office, with a more secure majority, so that we can get on with the job.

Sydney Bidwell (Southall): If you ... intend to vote Labour again ... may I warmly thank you in advance and urge you, in the name of our just and common cause, to make absolutely

sure you use your vote.

No word of dissension disturbed the orthodoxy of these addresses.

Hugh Jenkins was hanging so firmly on to Wilson's coat tails



that he embellished his address with a picture of the Leader, pipe and avuncular expression and all. There was plenty to protest about last March but the rebels held their tongues. And their seats.

(from News in Review, *Socialist Standard*, August 1966)

Exhibition Review continued

repaired and re-used, became official policy in 1942, but had been in fact practised for a couple of years before. 'Utility' clothing was produced the same year, with leading designers employed to make these standardised garments

be used in women's knickers, and silk stockings were particularly missed. No coupons were needed, though, for the clogs often worn by munitions workers.

Cosmetics continued to be produced, though in smaller quantities, as a way

in the blackout. As in the First World War, clothing became more relaxed and informal, a trend continued after the war with the 'New Look' from Paris, though clothes rationing continued till 1949 and the Utility scheme till 1952.

Both exhibitions make it clear that even in times of extreme austerity, people will do their best to maintain some self-expression and individuality.

Alongside her design at the Manchester Art Gallery display, Vivienne Westwood writes, 'Our rotten financial system creates poverty for the many, riches for the few. We have a war economy. ... We now know that this system - and the arms trade - helps create climate change - we are facing mass extinction. Fight the system and replace it with a green economy.' Westwood's politics might be politely described as confused, but this at least shows some attempt to see through the standard view.

PB



rather more stylish. Clothes had to be largely unadorned, with men's jackets limited to three pockets and three buttons, and no turn-ups on trousers. Elastic was in short supply, but could

of keeping up morale. Manufacturers and retailers managed to cash in on new kinds of demand such as handbags with room to keep a gas mask, and white hats and shawls to make the wearer visible

SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2015

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Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

AUGUST 2016

CANTERBURY

Saturday 13 August from **12.00 Noon**
Street Stall
In the Parade pedestrian precinct.

NORWICH

East Anglian Regional Branch
Saturday, 13 August, 12.00 noon – 4.00 p.m.
Venue: The Heartsease Pub, 180 Plumstead Road, Norwich, NR1 4JZ.

LONDON

Clapham

Sunday 14 August, 3.00 p.m.
Tolpuddle and Trade Unionism, then and now.
Speaker: Adam Buick
Venue: Socialist Party Premises, 52 Clapham High Street, SW7 4UN.
Chiswick

Tuesday 16 August, 8.00 p.m.

The Labour Leadership Election
Open discussion
Venue: Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN.

Carshalton

Monday 29 August from **10.30 a.m. (until 8.00 p.m.)**
Carshalton Environmental Fair
Venue: Carshalton Park, Ruskin Road, Carshalton, SM5 3DD
The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.

SEPTEMBER 2016

WAKEFIELD

Socialist History Group
Saturday 3 September, 1.00 p.m.
James Connolly and the Dublin Easter Rising (1916).
Adam Buick (Socialist Party) will be one of

five speakers.

Venue: The Red Shed, 18 Vicarage Street South, Wakefield, WF1 1QX
Free admission. Free light buffet.

NORFOLK

Sunday, 4 September from **11.00a.m.**
Venue: Burston Strike School Rally, Church Green, nr Diss, Norfolk, IP22 5TP.
The Socialist Party will have a stall at this event.

CANTERBURY

Saturday 17 September from **12.00 Noon**
Street Stall
In the Parade pedestrian precinct.

EC Meeting

Saturday 3 September, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN.
Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

Folkestone area Discussion Group

If there is anyone interested in the formation of a Discussion Group in the Folkestone area, contact: spgb.ksrb@worldsocialism.org or phone: 07971 715569.

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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More migrant misery

War and want have forced millions of our class to move. Those with the means, a minority, represent a market for smugglers. There is no guarantee that the dreamed of refuge will ever be reached, but the smugglers insist on payment and for them blood is an acceptable currency. 'Migrants who are unable to pay people smugglers for their journey from Africa to Europe are killed for their organs, a former smuggler has said. Nuredein Wehabrebi Atta, who has been sentenced to five years in prison for his involvement in moving migrants, told Italian police that migrants who couldn't pay for journeys across the Mediterranean were sold for €15,000 to groups, particularly Egyptians, who are equipped for harvesting organs' (independent.co.uk, 5 July). Avoiding this nightmare, those reaching Europe are greeted with hastily erected barriers and, quite possibly, hate in the form of Pegida, for example. Tatjana Festerling, the group's erstwhile leader, said of asylum seekers, 'if they keep crossing the border and you cannot arrest them, shoot them.' Apparently, on 'her Facebook page, Festerling bragged about spending an entire day with the Bulgarian Military Veterans Union a paramilitary group of vigilantes who patrol the border searching for illegal immigrants. Accompanying her was Edwin Wagensveld, a leader of a Dutch offshoot of Pegida' (neweurope.eu, 7 July).